

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL INJURIES

Do You Know These Facts About Grade School Injuries In Utah?

- Each year, one in every 14 students suffers an injury serious enough to need medical care.
- The rate of injuries peaks in 5th and 6th grades.
- In grades K-6, collisions with an object or person, tripping/slipping, and falls are the contributing factors in 4 out of 5 injuries.

UTAH SCHOOL INJURY REPORT TREND DATA (1997-2002) GRADES K-6

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

WHO

- Males sustain a higher percentage (60%) of injuries than females (40%).

WHAT

- Sprains, fractures and lacerations are the most common injuries. More than one-third of fractures occur to the elbow, arm, hand and finger.

WHEN

- Two-thirds of injuries occur during lunch and recess.

WHERE

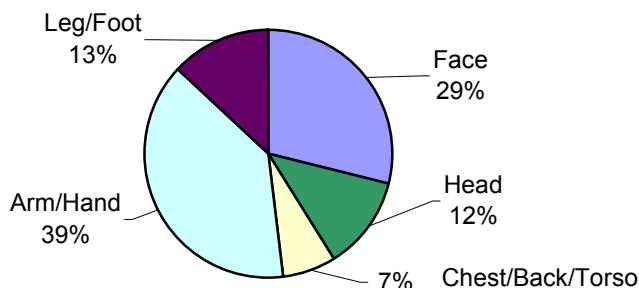
- The majority (70%) of injuries occur on the playground/playfield. The surface on which students are most likely to be injured is grass (21%).

WHY

- Risk-taking behaviors among students.
- Poor decision-making skills among students.
- Inadequately maintained equipment.
- Inadequate staff training on injury prevention.
- Lack of playground rules/enforcement of rules.

*All reportable injuries meet the following criteria: Any injury that is severe enough to cause the loss of one-half day or more of school and warrants medical attention and treatment (i.e., school nurse, M.D., ER staff, etc.).

Grades K-6 Area of Injury



PREVENTION TIPS*



- Provide safety training for playground supervisors, teachers and staff.
- Supervise students closely during recess.
- Develop playground safety rules, including the proper use of specific equipment.
- Teach students the rules.
- Enforce the rules and establish consequences for students who break them.
- Develop a plan that ensures playgrounds meet Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines.

*More resources can be found at www.cpsc.gov and www.uni.edu/playground

SERIOUS SCHOOL INJURIES IN UTAH 1997-2002

The following incidents are examples of school injuries in grades K-6. Prevention tips are highlighted below each incident.

Incident 1: A 5th grade boy was running on the grass during morning recess when he tripped on a sprinkler head and suffered a deep cut to his knee. The injury required emergency care by a school nurse and fifteen stitches by a doctor. The student missed 2 ½ days of school.

- *Inspect all recess areas regularly and correct any identified hazards.*

Incident 2: A 6th grade boy was injured while playing tetherball when the ball and chain suddenly broke away from the tetherball post. A nearby student kicked the ball and the clip on the end of the chain struck the boy in the mouth. The student missed 3 days of school and needed four teeth reconstructed.

- *Regularly inspect and maintain equipment.*

Incident 3: During recess, a 2nd grade boy was climbing upside-down on a fire pole when he slipped and fell onto his head. Staff called 9-1-1 and the student was treated for a sprained neck. He missed a half-day of school.

- *Provide playground supervision by staff trained in injury awareness and prevention.*

Incident 4: A group of 2nd grade students was playing a game at recess, standing on a hand railing to see who could balance the longest. A female student fell backward off the railing onto a cement surface, breaking her wrist in two places. She was treated at the scene by a school nurse and transported to a hospital for further care. She missed 2 days of school.

- *Provide supervision to ensure children play safely and only in areas where play is intended.*

CHOKING INJURIES

- Since Sept. 1997, 29 student injury reports have been received for children choking on objects like food and toys.
- Twenty of the 29 students were elementary school-age.
- The reports indicate at least 20 of the 29 injured students received the Heimlich Maneuver to clear their airway.
- Emergency first aid and CPR training of school staff are powerful tools for preventing serious injuries.

KIDS CAN HELP

Teachers know children learn by doing, so try this activity. Take students on a tour of the school grounds and ask them these questions:

1. How many adults are on duty at recess?
2. Is surfacing underneath equipment hard or soft?
3. Do the swings and slides have enough soft surfacing, or is it scattered around?
4. Do the swings have twisted or broken seats?
5. Is there anything sticking out of the ground that could trip you?
6. Does the wooden equipment have any rough spots or splinters?
7. Are there nails or bolts sticking out of the equipment?
8. What else do you see that might pose a problem or cause an injury?

After the tour, discuss some solutions and present a compiled list to the school principal.

